

Chapter 12 – Moving Forward

With all of these findings, we ask ourselves, where do we go from here? What will our capacity building project look like? Certainly the key finding regarding the perception of capacity will have a great impact on our role as providers of training and technical assistance. Much of our time will be spent being a critical, outsider perspective for the leaders and board members. We feel that this will be a necessary task in order to come to a mutual understanding of the most effective application of best practices in nonprofit management. However, we maintain that the relationship with these organizations is a partnership. We are not the experts in the capacity of these organizations. We are not the ones implementing the changes nor are we the ones ultimately making any decisions. Our role is to serve nonprofits and not to dictate orders. We seek open and honest discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the organizations because OFBCI and the state of Indiana in general are dependent upon these organizations to create better communities.

While much of our focus has been on the misperception of the challenges these organizations have, the findings also indicate that they have the same perception problem with their strengths. This may mean that these organizations already have the necessary resources and skills to strengthen their operations, but just need to be shown how to do so. We expect the majority of our work to be showing organizations that by utilizing their strengths, they can conquer their weaknesses.

An important aspect of building capacity is that it must include all stakeholders. The executive directors, board members, volunteers, and clients are all important, but our full integration into the nonprofit community will also hopefully bring in other key individuals in the planning process. As noted in the findings, many of the respondents do not seem to include their clients in the decision-making processes, evaluations, or program development. This is a problem because all individuals should be regarded as equal partners in providing social services. Clients have a critical insight that needs to be honored and respected by the organizations in order to create the most change in society as possible.

This collaboration among all stakeholders, which includes government, is the ultimate sustainable practice that will lead to the sharing of resources, meaningful partnerships, and enhanced community integration.

We have a dedicated commitment to the sustainability of our efforts. Though we will be working diligently to build the capacity of Hoosier nonprofits, our term of service is only one year. That is not much time to have a tremendous effect on capacity. And if organizations become dependent upon our services, they will actually be in a worse position by the time we leave than before we got there. There is a strong nonprofit infrastructure throughout the state to support organizations. The problem is that many grassroots organizations are on the fringe and not accessing these valuable resources. These types of nonprofits were our target audience, and we feel that they have as much to offer the nonprofit community as what they are able to gain from it. By the end of our term, we hope to render ourselves useless to our partner organizations because they are fully capable of building their capacity independently.

This should not serve so much as a conclusion, but as an introduction to our project. We have made the case for capacity building and explained the nature of our partnerships. In our immediate next steps and throughout the year, we will continue to work hard to integrate ourselves into the communities where these nonprofits serve. We recognize the tremendous debt we owe to nonprofits because the services they provide create better futures for us all. We are motivated by this opportunity to serve the survey respondent agencies and their communities, and look forward to realizing a great potential for the faith-based and community organizations in their efforts to serve those in poverty.